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## News Release

**For Immediate Release**

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### **STUDENTS, COMMUNITY TRIUMPH AS LAUSD CUTS THE RIBBON ON EDWARD R. ROYBAL LEARNING CENTER**

(Los Angeles, CA)—U.S. Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard, daughter of legendary community champion and late Congressman Edward R. Roybal, joined Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) school and elected officials, students, parents and community members today to cut the ribbon on the Edward R. Roybal Learning Center.

"My father believed that education was the single greatest gift we could pass on to our children, because an education, as he would say, 'can never be taken away from you,'" Roybal-Allard said. "That is why he fought throughout his career to provide our community with quality educational opportunities like the Roybal Learning Center will offer."

The opening of the 2,808-seat Roybal Learning Center is a significant milestone for the downtown educational community, allowing Belmont High School to return to a traditional, two-semester calendar for the first time in 26 years.

"Today we celebrate the legacy of our great civil rights leader Edward R. Roybal," LAUSD Board President Mónica García said. "We also honor the strength and courage of the hundreds of parents and students from the Pico-Union community who fought to bring this world-class school to their neighborhood. I am proud to be their partner as we strive to achieve one hundred percent graduation for the students of LAUSD!"

"Edward R. Roybal Learning Center is the kind of school facility all of our students deserve," LAUSD Superintendent David L. Brewer III said. "We are here celebrating today because people inside the District and out had the vision and tenacity to push forward in challenging times. That same vision and tenacity remains at work to bring continued progress for our students."

"It is a fitting tribute to Ed Roybal, a man who has shown us what it means to be an elected official," California State Senator Gil Cedillo said. "He was a true public servant who made it a priority to serve his community."

"The Edward R. Roybal Learning Center is a gift to our students from our community and symbolizes the great hope we have for their future," California State Senate Majority Leader Gloria Romero said. "The Center stands as a tribute to the great man for whom it is named. May all students who pass through this learning center build on the great legacy of leadership he bestowed to our nation."

The LAUSD Board of Education was supported by numerous community organizations and elected officials in naming the school in honor of the late Congressman Roybal (1916-2005), who is recognized as one of the most prominent Latino civil rights leaders of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Roybal graduated from Roosevelt High School and went on to become a devoted public servant and community leader who dedicated his life to helping others.

Roybal served on the Los Angeles City Council from 1949 to 1962 and served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1963 to 1993. Key among his many achievements is his work on behalf of young people, including the creation of educational programs, expansion of college funding and development of employment initiatives. He was also a founding member of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute in 1976.

"The opening of the Edward R. Roybal Learning Center has been greatly anticipated by the community," California State Assembly Speaker Emeritus Fabian Nuñez said. "This state of the art facility will certainly provide a world class education to well deserving students in the City of Los Angeles. I am honored to join in the celebration of this tremendous accomplishment and I applaud the efforts by many who made this day a reality."

In addition to a portrait of Roybal which hangs in the school's main office, a bust of the congressman by sculptor Pedro Martinez unveiled at the ribbon-cutting ceremony will be housed in the school's library.

"By creating small schools and a safe campus for students, the new Roybal Learning Center carries on the legacy of a great pioneer dedicated to reforming education in Los Angeles," Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa said.

"After the vote was taken by the board back in 2003 to approve my plan to move forward with this school, I recalled thinking that hope had won over fear," Los Angeles City Councilman José Huizar said. The former school board president came up with an alternative plan for the site, which included the adjacent Vista Hermosa Park. "That was a very proud moment for me, knowing that this community and these children were finally going to get the state-of-the-art campus they so richly deserved. And seeing it up and running today reminds me that we did the right thing to create this learning and community oasis."

The campus facilities are comprised of small learning communities, each including general studies, science, and specialized classrooms, as well as local administration. A separate building on the campus accommodates a library, cafeteria, auditorium and a parent/student center. The campus also features a large gymnasium with locker rooms, as well as outdoor athletic facilities.

"The Edward R. Roybal Learning Center provides relief to some pockets of the Temple-Beaudry community that reach 50,000 people per square mile," Los Angeles City Councilman Ed P. Reyes said, whose district includes the new school. "Before the opening of the new school, students were on a multi-track calendar and packed in overcrowded classrooms. Now, students can enjoy a traditional two-semester calendar and a more personalized learning experience at a school that is like a mini college campus. The Roybal Center features small learning communities with lots of open windows, and stretches of green space for students to walk through on their way to class."

Thanks to the generosity of the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks, the Amateur Athletic Foundation, the Weingart Foundation and L.A. 84, the 9.7-acre park at Vista Hermosa features an athletic-turf soccer field available to the public and school sponsored programs.

Roybal Learning Center, home of the Titans, serves students in ninth through 12<sup>th</sup> grades and is home to four small learning communities (SLCs) and two independent pilot schools. The SLCs were established at Belmont High School and have moved their complete programs over to Roybal Learning Center. The SLCs are: the International School of Languages, the Activists for Educational Empowerment, the Business and Finance Academy and the Computer Science Academy.

The two independent pilot schools are Civitas School of Leadership and the School for Visual Arts and Humanities (SVAH). Civitas School of Leadership opened with students in the ninth and 10<sup>th</sup> grade, and will add 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades in the next two years. The School for Visual Arts and Humanities begins with students ninth through 12<sup>th</sup> grades. These schools are part of the Belmont Zone of Choice Initiative. First

established in 2007, the Belmont Zone of Choice is a network of 500-student, autonomous college preparatory schools that downtown-area families can select based on students' interest.

"Had we abandoned our vision and listened to the naysayers, Belmont High School would still be operating on a year-round calendar," LAUSD Chief Facilities Executive Guy Mehula said. "Today is a crowning day for LAUSD's building program, and most importantly for the students and community our new school construction program serves."

"When the construction of this school was halted the community was outraged. Parents, students and community leaders rallied at the steps of the school board for years because we knew the school could be built safely, and the District needed to be held accountable for doing so," Alliance for a Better Community Executive Director Veronica Melvin said.

"Investing in the education of the children in our community will surely forge a future for prosperity," parent activist and community member Francisco Torrero said.

La Plaza de Artes y Culturas and Alliance for a Better Community developed [www.royballearningcenter.org](http://www.royballearningcenter.org) as a gift to the school, which includes further information about the life of Edward R. Roybal and the school community can be found.

"The Edward R. Roybal Learning Center is not only a beautiful multi-colored structure, but it's also a well thought out learning environment, that personalizes the education experiences for it's 9-12 grade students through a combination of small theme based learning communities and autonomous pilot schools," Local District Superintendent 4 Richard Alonzo said. "Our goal is to improve graduation rates and educate students to be college prepared and career ready."

The Edward R. Roybal Learning Center is one of 74 new schools completed as part of LAUSD's \$12.6 billion new school construction program to end involuntary busing and year round calendars, and to provide every student a seat in a neighborhood school. To date, LAUSD has completed 74 new schools and 59 additions, providing more than 77,000 new classroom seats for students throughout the District. The program is on track to deliver a total of 132 new schools by 2012. For more information, please visit [www.laschools.org](http://www.laschools.org).

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